

6 ENHANCING THE HARBOR ENVIRONMENT

The 1999 Harbor Plan identified a number of infrastructure improvements that it recommended to be implemented in three phases (Table 2.1). The three phases were: completion within 2-years (Phase I); completion within 5-years (Phase II) and completion within 7-years (Phase III). It was envisaged that some of the recommended infrastructure improvements would be completed over a number of phases. Additionally, since the 1999 Plan was developed, there have been a number of new issues that have arisen and a number of new initiatives implemented.

6-1 THE STATUS OF IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED IN THE 1999 HARBOR PLAN

Dredging in Smiths Cove

The 1999 Harbor Plan recommended that the State's Dredge Material Management Plan could help resolve issues with a plan to dredge Smiths Cove that was approved by the ACOE in 1990. However, as previously discussed, on-going disagreement about the disposal of dredge material has prevented any further movement on this recommendation.

Removal of Hazards to Navigation

The 1999 Harbor Plan recommended a number of dredging projects that should be undertaken in the Federal Channel and in Smiths Cove and these have been discussed earlier. However, the 1999 Plan also recommended that a number of derelict or sunken vessels be removed as they constituted a hazard to navigation. By the time of the current update, this recommendation had been implemented and the vessels had been removed.

A second type of hazard that was found within the Inner Harbor in 1999 was derelict and dilapidated wharfs and pilings. In many instances there has been no action to address this problem. There continue to be a number of areas where old pilings remain in place (e.g. in front of the Building Supply Center and off Americold in East Gloucester). In other areas, the wharfs and piers remain dilapidated and, since the 1999 Plan, the wharf at Neptune Marine in Harbor Cove collapsed into the Harbor. However, since its collapse, the property owner has removed the debris and repaired the property's bulkhead. There are also plans to rebuild the wharf.

In other areas there have been significant improvements. Three projects recently received Seaport Bond funding. These projects are: to complete the engineering/design and permitting stages to renovate Solomon Jacobs Landing on Harbor Loop; to re-deck the pier at St. Peter's Park; and for repair of the docks at the Maritime Heritage Center. Some of these improvements were quickly implemented and the others should be underway shortly.

Seawall Repairs

The 1999 Plan recommended that the seawalls in a number of locations in both the Inner and Outer Harbor be repaired. These included: Cripple Cove Landing, Robinson's Landing, Fort Square, the south side of the Blynman Canal, Stacy Boulevard and along Lucy Davis walkway. There has been a great deal of progress with these repairs, with all but the Lucy Davis walkway and portions of Stacy Boulevard having been completed. Currently, Seaport Bond funding has been provided to complete the design, engineering and permitting aspects of this phase of the work. The funding for the construction phase has not yet been received and is expected to be between \$2-3 million. The remaining sections are expected to be completed in the next few years.

Expanded of Moorings / Floats

The 1999 Plan recommended that the mooring field at the head of Smiths Cove be expanded. As yet there has been no movement on this.

Additionally, it recommended that a Mooring Study be undertaken to ascertain ways to expand the number of moorings available to resident, transient and commercial vessels in other areas of the Harbor. The suggestion was that there was potential for more moorings in Smith Cove and off the State Fish Pier. Such a study has not been undertaken.

Improved Landings for Water Shuttles and Other Boats

The 1999 Plan recommended that a Water Transportation Study be implemented to identify ways to improve landings for all types of boats through improvements in shoreside infrastructure. While a comprehensive study was never conducted, a 2002 study on the viability of developing Gloucester as a ferry terminal servicing Shelburne, Nova Scotia was undertaken. The study concluded that a high-speed ferry from Gloucester to Shelburne was possible in terms of locating a suitable site, generating money from the service, and having companies interested in the idea. The most viable site was 6 Rowe Square (this site is currently being developed as the Gloucester Marine Terminal – see below).

Efforts to attract a ferry operation to Gloucester are on-going with possibilities of connections to Nova Scotia or Provincetown, MA.

The planned renovation of Solomon Jacobs Landing using Seaport Bond funding will help to achieve this and will also complete another of the recommendations proposed in the 1999 Plan: to develop it as a gateway for visiting vessels and so it can service excursion boats and water taxis.

Blynman Bridge Improvements

The 1999 Plan suggested that a study should be undertaken to assess the issues associated with the bridge and identify if there were a need for staging areas for boats. The Plan also recommended that an engineering study be commissioned to determine the options for replacing the existing bridge with a new one or to build a second bridge. Such a study was never undertaken and the current feeling is that this is no longer a priority issue.

The Plan also suggested that a variable message system at the bridge could help to alert boats about other vessel traffic. Once again, there has been no movement on this since the 1999 Plan was developed.

Improvements to Reduce Traffic Congestion / Conflict

The 1999 Plan recommended that the parking in Harbor Loop be improved to reduce conflicts between trucks and cars and to increase the parking capacity of the area. Additionally, there was a recommendation that Commercial Street should be redesigned to facilitate the movement of trucks that service the marine industrial businesses on the street and to develop buffers between the residential and these businesses.

These recommendations have not been implemented. However, there continues to be a general consensus that Commercial Street is no longer suitable for increased truck traffic and businesses that are not reliant on trucks should be encouraged, as opposed to those that have such requirements.

A third recommendation to alleviate parking congestion was the development of satellite parking for visitors. If visitors were encouraged to park at remote locations, such as Stage Fort Park, the MBTA Station or the Gloucester High School, this could significantly reduce the demand for parking downtown. For such a system to work, the remote locations would need to be linked to

the downtown by a bus or water shuttle service. While this has never been implemented, it is still under consideration and many feel that it should be available to visitors during the summer months.

Improvements Associated with Fish Processing

The 1999 Plan had two recommendations regarding the processing of fish. The first was that a study should be undertaken to assess the costs and trade-offs associated with using freshwater versus salt water for processing fish and the potential new technologies available to recycle water. While this specific study was not undertaken, a more holistic study focused on the recycling of materials generated by Gloucester's seafood industry was carried out (Greiner Environmental, Inc and Perlmutter & Associates, 2003).

The report concluded that there were a number of recycling-based, economic development opportunities in Gloucester. These ranged from opportunities for individual businesses to potential large-scale infrastructure improvements. One recommendation from the report was that further study should be undertaken that focused on the options for the pretreatment of wastewater from fish processing as such pretreatment is key to the expansion of fish processing in Gloucester.

The 1999 Harbor Plan also suggested that pretreatment was a necessity if Gloucester is to continue to undertake significant amounts of fish processing. The Plan suggests that a demonstration project be established. While this has not been implemented, there is general agreement that a pretreatment facility would be beneficial to the City and, if developed, should be located in the Industrial Port area, perhaps on the State Fish Pier. If successful, the facility could be expanded or other facilities developed.

6-2 OTHER IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THE 1999 HARBOR PLAN

Many of the recommendations from the 1999 Harbor Plan focused on public infrastructure. Clearly, there has been significant movement on some fronts, less on others and some are no longer viewed as a priority.

Since the 1999 Plan, there have also been a number of other developments within the Harbor. Probably the two most significant are the establishment of the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center and the Gloucester Marine Terminal.

Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center

The Center is run by a nonprofit organization that was established in 1999 when 300 local people joined together to purchase Gloucester Marine Railway site on Harbor Loop. The two-fold mission of the Center is "to champion the preservation of Gloucester's maritime industrial history and tradition" and "to serve as a resource for the study of maritime history, industry and ecology" (<http://www.gloucestermaritimecenter.org/>).

The Center features the oldest continuously operating marine railway in the country, which was built in 1849. A second railway was added in 1856.

The 1999 Harbor Plan recommended the development of an extensive new museum focused on the history of the fishing industry in Gloucester combined with a welcome center. While the Maritime Heritage Center is a much smaller undertaking than had been envisaged, it fulfills many of the roles that the 1999 Plan regarded as important. Many feel that the smaller scale of the current operation is more in keeping with the character of the waterfront. The Center provides visitors with information on what to do and what to see in Gloucester. Additionally, the Center allows public access to its piers and to the marine railway where visitors can observe the

maintenance and repair of vessels. The piers themselves offer views of various parts of the Harbor, and elsewhere on the property visitors can see boatbuilding, or visit the outdoor aquarium and dive exhibit.

In addition to introducing visitors to some of the traditional waterfront activities, the Center has an active educational program that has recently been enhanced by the addition of a new classroom in 2005.

The general consensus is that the attractions and visitor services offered by the Maritime Heritage Center, in conjunction with the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, the visitor information booth on Harbor Loop, the Visitor Center at Stage Fort Park and the Cape Ann Historical Museum achieve much of what the 1999 Plan envisaged for visitors.

Gloucester Marine Terminal

A recent, but as yet not fully-realized addition to the Gloucester waterfront is the plan for the Gloucester Marine Terminal. While the terminal building itself has yet to be constructed, the plan has been approved by the State agencies and the City and the property owner has developed a facility security plan that was approved by the US Coast Guard, thus allowing a number of cruise ships to visit Gloucester during 2004.

No port calls were scheduled during 2005 so the plans for the new terminal could be completed and construction could begin. The groundbreaking for the new terminal is planned for October 2005, with the terminal being ready for operation in fall 2006.

Vessels up to 500 feet in length and drawing 18 feet of water can be accommodated alongside the dock of the terminal. Larger vessels (up to 800 feet in length and a draft of 26 feet) can anchor in the Outer Harbor from where passengers can be transported to the terminal via smaller boats. Even larger vessels can be accommodated outside the breakwater.

The plan is to start to aggressively market Gloucester as a cruise ship destination once the construction phase of the Gloucester Marine Terminal is underway. This marketing aims to work in conjunction with a plan to market a number of ports in Massachusetts as the "Historic Ports of Massachusetts". This initiative aims to "sell" the ports of Gloucester, Salem, Boston, Fall River and New Bedford collectively, rather than them have competing against one another.

At this time there are a half dozen port calls scheduled during 2006 and the hope is that this number will increase.

Once completed, the marine terminal will be able to handle cruise ships, ferries and other large passenger vessels, including those from outside the US.